

LINCOLN

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

1809 - 1865

ONE STAR DIFFERETH FROM
ANOTHER STAR

by

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ONE STAR DIFFERETH FROM ANOTHER STAR IN GLORY

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WHEN ONE STAR is near the zenith, another star is on the horizon's edge, or just beneath. Then the one at zenith, though of lesser magnitude, may for the time, outshine the greater star.

In the year 1809, the star of the greatest military genius of the centuries was near the zenith. For two years it shown in unrivaled brilliancy; then it waned. It sank at last behind clouds so deep and dark that not a ray of light shone through. Barely more than six years after Napoleon I. was Master of Continental Europe, he became the prisoner of St. Helena to remain there, to die there.

In that same year, 1809, there was born in America, in the wild woods of Kentucky a certain baby boy. The circumstances of his birth,—the place where he was born, the family into which he was born,—were such as to give no sign that a new star of first magnitude was just beneath the horizon's edge. Nor until fifty years later did it approach its zenith to shine in unrivaled splendor. Six years later though setting amidst the storm clouds, it still

shown uneclipsed turning the very clouds into a sea of glory. This is not a species of idolatry in hero worship. It is the calm verdict of the years,— as certain as that one star differeth from another star in glory.

There are few, if any chapters, in the history of the greatness of human life, to be compared with this one, in the contrast between the depths of poverty and obscurity into which it was born, and the heights of glory to which it ascended. Too poverty-stricken for the parents to afford him a cradle even, the only cradle he ever knew was a tired mother's aching arms, —arms aching from never ending and hopeless toil. When the boy was still a mere child, the family took up the emigrant's trail from the woods of Kentucky to the wilds of Indiana. The family found a home there, in a house not so comfortable as many a barn which now shelters the well bred cattle of the same region. In such a house, worn out by the struggle against the hopeless poverty, and attacked by a fever of the swampy woods, the mother died. On her grave amidst the dim forest the boy sobbed out his first great grief.

The years ran on. In the shadows of the all-engulfing wilderness, he grew into youth. While the children of Pilgrim and Puritan and Cavalier in the older parts of the country,— the future men who were to be his competitors in the race for high hon-

or and power,—drank from the fountains of knowledge amidst gentle surroundings, this youth picked up the alphabet and whatever else he could—God knows how or when or where. While they were advancing through the highest and best schools of the land, guided and inspired by as competent teachers as the world ever knew, this boy in the intervals of never-ending toil, lay sprawled out under the trees, or in the evenings before the firelight learning from the few books which came his way, unguided and uninspired save by the voices of the Solitude which seemed to him ever as the voice of the infinite calling to a greatness which Destiny had surely reserved for him. Destiny we say, for we believe with him that “There is a Destiny which shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will.

At the age of about sixteen, he was hired out to work for a neighbor, at twenty-five cents per day. At eighteen he made a trip by flatboat, as a “hand” on the boat, to New Orleans. We need not think harshly of his father, for this. Thomas Lincoln was not a drunkard; neither was he “lazy lout.” He was a carpenter in a land where carpenters were in about as much demand as outside coal in Newcastle; at a time when housebuilders of any sort were not paid one dollar *per hour*. He was fortunate to get seventy-five cents *per day*, a few months per year. The needs of the family called for the boy’s work

and wage—a thing not unknown in many an American family still.

Once again the family took up the emigrant trail to find a permanent home in Sangamon County, Illinois. Abraham Lincoln was then twenty-one years old, a giant in stature, without a dollar to his name but having read, we are told, almost all the books within a radius of fifty miles. Among these books, were the Bible, Aesop's Fables, a Life of Washington and not least important of all, a copy of the statutes of Indiana containing the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence and the Ordinance of 1787 guaranteeing the Northwest Territory against the encroachments of slavery. Of this latter he made use more than thirty years later in writing the Emancipation Proclamation.

Also he had won a title without knowing it. We may well doubt if he ever won a more significant title than "Honest Abe." He was called "queer;" he was thought "lazy" by some the like of whom still think that the only workers are the toilers-with-hands; he was called homely and he certainly was in that class. But while he often needed money, and handled other people's money, including Government money; while he even got into debt not entirely through his own fault, no one ever seemed to *think* even, that he would lie or steal. Would there were more like him today!

When he was twenty-two, he made a second trip on a flatboat to New Orleans. It was then he saw the slave markets. What he said need not trouble us much. What he thought we may guess. Who can fathom his thoughts on the return trip, as he stood hour by hour watching the waters of the great river hurrying on to the sea, through a land where freedom and slavery overlapped? Listen for a clew to his thoughts, in the Voice crying in the Wilderness some twenty years later! "When the white man governs himself that is self-government. When he governs himself and another, that is despotism." Thoughts are the stuff which shakes Nations, which forces reforms, and which turns the currents of World-history. That one thought was the material which turned the current of his own Country's history!

Time forbids us to dwell on the years between 1830—60. February 11, 1861! Who could have dreamed it thirty years before? He was then President-elect of the United States of America! Of the United States of America—the greatest experiment in Human Rights and capacity the World has yet seen! To the Presidency—that office of which a great Senator has but recently said: "The highest honor which can be bestowed upon a man."

On that winter day 1861, he stood on the rear platform of a train at Springfield, Illinois. A great

throng had gathered to see him off to Washington to assume the duties of President. Secession was already a fact. Civil War was inevitable. The President elect stood with uncovered head. The gaunt sad face seemed doubly sad in the clear cold light and the solemn stillness of the winter morning. With trembling lips, and a voice uncertain, with emotion, he spoke to his old friends and neighbors:—

“To this place I owe everything. I now leave it not knowing whether ever I may return. I go to a task greater than that which rested upon Washington. Trusting in Him who can go with me and remain with you, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well.” As the train drew out, far as the watchers could see through eyes blurred with tears, he still stood with uncovered head looking back. When the city faded from his sight, it was to be forever. Four years later the same friends and neighbors received him in state. But he knew it not.

Four years went by:—years of storm—years of war, and bloodshed, and deadly hate. Years for him, of agonizing work which made the struggles of youth, hard as they were, seem like child’s play. Years such that when they were past, one home in every six counted one dead on the fields of Civil War. Worse still, throughout those years, in unnumbered homes, the bitterest enemies were of

their own household. Mrs. Lincoln's two brothers died Confederate soldiers on the fields of Shiloh and Vicksburg. But the war clouds were breaking at last. Richmond had fallen. The Nation remained unbroken. The streets of Washington resounded with the tread and shouts of the victorious armies on their homeward march. Over the face of the President in those few fleeting days, came a light and look of unutterable joy and peace. Then without warning, amidst the twilight shadows of an April evening, an assassin's bullet sped unerringly on its errand of death. His star set amidst the storm. But the brilliancy of it even its setting amidst the storm clouds turned the very clouds to undying glory. "One star differeth from another star in glory." We shall not see another of such magnitude, ever!

Now a question:—what makes his star shine in such unrivaled splendor after all the years? It is no mystery.

He was an American of Americans. Five generations of Lincolns before him, lived on American soil, the first at Salem, Mass. It gave him without effort, and unconsciously, an undivided allegiance.

American history was his history; he had no other. America's struggles were his struggles. America's life was his life, the only life he felt or knew. He and his family before him had lived in

six colonies and states before and after the War for Independence. He thought not in terms of East, or West, North or South. He thought without thinking in terms of the Nation, one and inseparable. He knew *one* flag, *one* allegiance, *one* devotion, because he never had a chance to know a second! I am stating the facts of a Life and the law which determined them. I am stating them without prejudice or malice. I am stating them in the atmosphere of a city which makes it all doubly clear and true. Adopted sons have come to America to do here great honor and great service. Many have laid down their lives in her defense. It will be so in the future.

But the founders of the American Republic were almost wiser than they knew when they made it a part of the Constitution to allow none but native-born to be Presidents. The several states and great cities too, might have followed the principle much farther to the lasting good of all, so we firmly believe.

While human nature is human nature, while ties of Native Land, kindred and home, remain for the multitudes the strongest ties they ever know, the Senator from the State of ———, and Scandanavia perhaps; the Representative from the state of——— and a Socialistic party with more European than American elements in it; the Mayor of—— bound

to hierarchies of this or that order whose heads are living in other lands; the heads of mighty industrial groups not infrequently containing more alien than native blood, sanctioning police strikes, and denouncing the Supreme court of the Nation,— all these will lack something.

They will lack wholeness of vision if no more. They will lack the ability to see beyond state lines, social groups, racial habits of thought and life. They may have vision enough to meet nine emergencies out of ten. But it is just that *tenth* emergency wherein the fate of the Nation trembles in the balance. They can not see as Webster saw, as Lincoln saw, that the Nations can not exist half-slave and half-free; no more can it continue to exist half alien and half American. It must cease to be divided or the Government will fall. It is better for all concerned that it cease to be divided. One flag, one allegiance, always and indivisible.

When it happens as it has happened that candidates for high office in Nation, States and Cities find it necessary to throw "sop" to foreign elements to win an election in an American State or Municipality, something is wrong. Alien influences are there and there stronger than American. We are blind if we do not see it. We are unfaithful to our Country, her history and destiny if we fail to rebuke it.

Abraham Lincoln had a quality of honor which supported his Americanism under all circumstances. A man may be an American of Americans and yet betray his Country in spite of all. Men did that in 1860-61, also before and since then! Charity for the shortcomings of others is a noble quality if not carried too far. If carried too far it becomes folly, even criminal. Gen. Lee was an able General; America has seen few abler. In his private life he was admirable. After the war he was blameless, commendable. But when men attempt to set him equally in honor with Grant or Sherman or Scott or President Lincoln, they go too far. There is 100% loyalty; truth compels us to say that any man who took up arms against his country was less than 100% loyal. Of course Gen. Lee, (and I use his name merely as an example, because conspicuous) was a Virginian; Jefferson Davis was a Kentuckian. However, Scott, Thomas and Farragut were Virginians also, and Lincoln was as much a Kentuckian as Davis. So also was Mrs. Lincoln a Kentuckian and loyal both to the Union and her husband the President. When the Confederacy offered Gen. Scott command of her armies, the office which Lee accepted, Scott said: "I have served my Country under the flag of the Union for more than fifty years. As long as God permits me

to live, I will defend that flag with my sword even if my own native state assails it." That *is honor*, the only honor which avails a Nation when her existence is threatened! And that was the quality of Lincoln's honor! Honor is a much greater thing than keeping within the Law. It is much more than telling the truth when one speaks. Thieves have gone through bankruptcy courts, retaining their loot. Demagogues and crooks have kept silence to save their faces. Perhaps the administration of Justice, today, is more hindered by unprincipled men in Lincoln's proffession than by all others. Even Church men have gone blind and dumb to gain and retain high places. Douglas, a man in most things high in honor, was not always above the tricks of the politician out to win; he won the Senatorship in 1858 so.

The Senatorship was the one office Lincoln really wanted. He went to the Springfield Convention in 1858 wanting the nomination, and made no effort to conceal his desire. Slavery was the burning issue then; so much so that three years later it set the Nation aflame with Civil War. Lincoln's attitude toward Slavery was no secret. He was selected to make the speech of the Convention, and was told by the leading men to keep silence on that subject. The Convention opened; the time for his speech came. The first sentence echoed throughout the

Convention hall; in time it carried to the farthest corners of the land. "A house divided against itself can not stand. I do not believe this Government can endure half-slave and half-free."

Daring speech and heroic faith—that! We can see it easily enough now. Not so then. He had "ruined his party" and "thrown away his own chance of the Senatorship." He was unmoved. "If I had to erase the whole record of my life" he said, "and were offered one poor gift or choice to save from the wreck I would choose that speech and leave it unerased!" That is honor with courage undaunted and uncompromising!

Can you imagine honor like that, softpedaling on some burning issues of today? Can you think of such honor as that resigning high office in Cabinet or on the Bench to accept \$100,000 per year as head of Commercial or Sporting enterprises? Can you think of him lending his influence to break down the Constitution, or to support a Social or Industrial or other group or class, in the destruction of equal rights before the Law? There may be things which are legal, even popular, which are not without the appearance of unmistakable evil. The star of traffic in honor, and human rights may blaze like a meteor; it will fade in the same manner. The star of honor that risks all upon right and justice, can not fade into utter darkness.

This man has been called a genius. If the capacity for hard work, and the will to persist in doing it is "genius," we may assent. "Genius has eagles' wings," but even eagles must use their wings. The same hard toil which swung the woodman's ax, and which mastered Geometry as well as some of the greatest literature of the Ages, and did it without a teacher, so that in time none surpassed him reasoning, in the use of his mother-tongue, or in the clear apprehension of the greatest issues which ever confronted the Nation, will or would make many a common man into a "genius."

He had a magnanimity of spirit which came near "hoping all things, believing all things, enduring all things." He was not a Beau Brummel in figure, face or dress, (though he was scrupulously clean of person.) The things said of his personal appearance, i. e. Stanton in the reaper case at Cincinnati, stung his sensitive nature into a kind of agony of humiliation which he could hardly forget, yet which he seems never to have cherished with resentment. Members of his Cabinet said and did all but unpardonable things. Officers of the Army raised to honor in a day, all but spat in the face of their chief benefactor. "McClellan is handsomer than I, but I'm the longer," so he turned it aside, mindful of one only, *not himself*, but his Country and her suffering millions. "With malice

toward none, with charity for all" was with him, more than rhetoric. It was the unconscious revelation of a great spirit.

He had a saving sense of humor, which some professed not to understand, and which others abused. The possession of the same has saved (probably) the life of one President since in our day; and the lack of it wrecked, embittered and killed a second. Lincoln had a natural dignity which held the fawning and presuming at arms length; and a democracy of spirit which makes him akin to the uncounted and unnamed millions, high and low alike. The most lustrous of all his qualities of spirit remains; his consciousness of and his confidence in the Almighty. Theologically he has been called about everything; Atheist, Deist, Christian, Fatalist, and what not! Atheist, he certainly was not. Anyone familiar with his most serious conversations and addresses in the most critical hours of his career must know two things:

(1) He was familiar to an amazing degree with the Scriptures.

(2) He lived and moved as in the Presence of the Infinite. "The Bible was always on the President's desk." I suppose so. Much more to the point, it seems to have been read. It's language became his. He breathed the life of it. The speech which made clear the issue of 1858-60

began with a quotation from the teachings of Jesus. "I vowed to God" he said, and wrote the Emancipation Proclamation. "This Nation under God," he said at Gettysburg. "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether," so he quoted in the Second Inaugural address. And again in the same address he used the words of the Savior: "It must be that offences come." At one time he used the Name—"God." At another, "Our Heavenly Father." Again he said "the Almighty has his purpose," and "If God wills." When Richmond had fallen, when he visited the city and found himself surrounded by the negroes in the street kneeling to worship him, he shrank from them and spoke to them in words unconsciously borrowed from the last chapter of Revelation: "you must not worship me. Worship God only. I am but God's humble instrument." So he gave to himself the one fitting name: "God's humble Instrument."

He has been called superstitious. Perhaps he was. If that is the right name for it, would that more men in public and private life were also superstitious. The half uttered prophecy at Springfield February 11, 1861, that he would never see them again, was destined to be fulfilled. On the day when he was nominated for the Presidency, when he had received the news of his nomination, wearied by the excitement and hours of

waiting, he went home and lay down on a couch to rest. From where he lay, he saw a double image of himself in the mirror. One image was clear; the other dim and uncertain. It disturbed him. He arose and lay down again to see if the two would return; they did. He told his wife about it. He expressed the conviction that he would meet with some terrible end. On the very morning of that fateful April 14, 1865, while waiting for Seward at a Cabinet meeting, he told those present of a dream of the night before. He dreamed he was aboard a ship drifting toward some dim and unknown shore. It was his *third* dream of that same phantom ship! But the War was over. The knowledge of that fact filled Washington with a gladness which none could escape. The dream of the phantom ship was forgotten. We need not follow the path of the President through that day. Night settled over the city. He entered the fatal Theatre while the band played "Hail to the Chief." He had hardly settled himself into the chair in his box, when from just behind, came a burst of flame, and a pistol's report. His head dropped forward. He was aboard the Phantom ship at last, drifting toward the dim and unknown shore!

*"Oh Captain, My Captain!
Rise up and hear the bells.*

*Rise up, for you the flag is flying, for you the
bugle trills.*

*For you boquets and ribboned wreath,—for you
the shores acrowding!*

*For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager
faces turning!*

Hear Captain, Dear father!

This arm beneath your head!

It is some dream that on the deck

You are fallen cold and dead!

Oh Captain, My Captain!

Tenderly, while the Nation wept, they bore his body back to his old home in Springfield, Illinois. There amidst familiar scenes which he loved above all, they laid him to rest. They laid him to rest where the winds of the Prairies still are singing his requiem, and where the pure waters of the Sangamon seem ever murmuring the story of his simple greatness.

*“God took a piece of common human clay;
Planted therein ambition’s vital seed;
Placed him a youth beside the common way,
That he might learn the common human need.
Made strong by strife, he faced the storm of wrath;
Love made him wise, a Nation’s cause to plead.
He walked with God, though in a Yeoman’s path,
And seized on fame by an Immortal deed.”*



